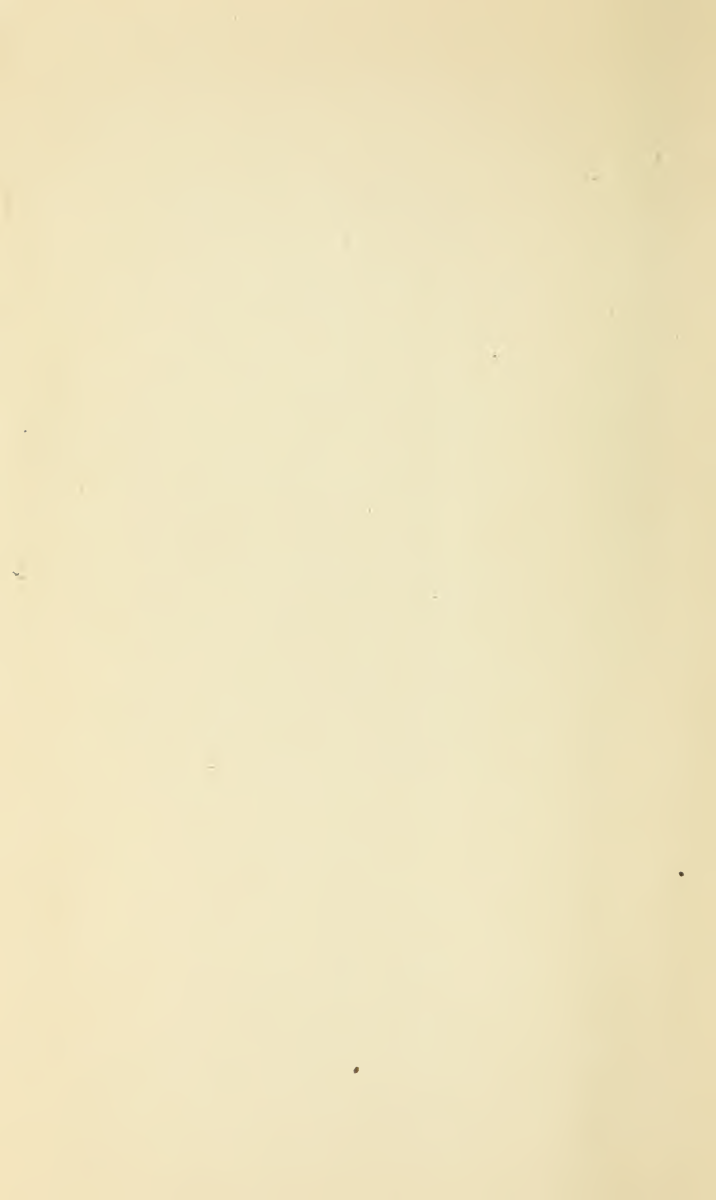




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The CROSS SAVES
ROBERT F. HORTON



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By ROBERT F. HORTON



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By
ROBERT F. HORTON



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PREFACE

IN 1905 I issued a little book entitled "Does the Cross Save?" It consisted of three addresses given to students who were inclined to surrender the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. The little book was assailed by certain representatives of the New Theology. On the other hand, some readers perceived in it the ever-new Old Theology of the Gospel. Consequently it did its work, like Him of whom it spoke, in reproach and rejection, and yet in the triumph of despised truth.

When another edition was needed, my friend, Mr. Meyer, asked me to enlarge the book a little, and to make it a fuller statement of the central truth of our religion. I have therefore inserted, between Chapters II. and III., four additional chapters of explanation and defence.

In this slightly ampler form I venture (presumptuous as it seems) to change the title from a question: "Does the Cross Save?" into an assertion, and to call this new edition "How the Cross Saves."

As my years run out, and my ministry enters its fourth decade, the fact of Christ and the central significance of the Cross become more steady and settled, like a picture cast by the limelight

on the screen, which at first wavers and is blurred, but presently becomes firm and clear, or like a day which has battled with storm-clouds lit only by fitful gleams during the morning, but in the afternoon grows calm and luminous, sinking towards the splendor of the evening, and the sunset consummation lights of death.

ROBERT F. HORTON.

CHESILS, HAMPSTEAD.

I

ATONEMENT IS OF GOD

LET us for a while concentrate our thoughts and our prayers upon the central and distinctive doctrine of our faith, the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us earnestly pray that it may become a great reality to us and a message which we may deliver to others. And, in order to start the subject, let us take the passage in 2 Cor. v. 18, 19: "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

First I will in a few sentences lay down the lines of the thought which I propose to follow. And then I will go back to the beginning and advance more leisurely, step by step. Starting from this text, (1) we should lay stress upon the point that "all things are of God," and that the Atonement is "of God"—His doing and not ours. (2) We should ask: What is the situation, the actual condition of man, which demands an Atonement? (3) We should enquire: What are the atonements that are made, let us say, by the other religions of the world, or by the natural

tendencies and suggestions of men, to meet that situation? (4) And then, by way of contrast with that which has been attempted in other religions, or by human thought, we would seek to bring out what has been offered and done in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (5) Then we would try to look into the mystery of that achievement so far as we are permitted. Angels desire to look into it, and they but partially understand—but we would try as far as our powers go to look into the mystery of it, to understand it. (6) When this has been brought out as clearly as it may be, we shall be in a position to apprehend the thought that here indeed is a “word of reconciliation,” entrusted to us to give to the world and to *all* the world.

Now, to come to the first point, which starts in this 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians, the point that God initiates and carries out the Atonement. Let us fortify the statement here by turning to another passage in St. Paul, and also to a passage in St. John. In Rom. iii. 25 we read about Christ that “God hath set Him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” And almost in the same words, though simpler, in 1 John iv. 10: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that

He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

If we can get hold of this truth, that all these things are of God, we dispose of one of the great objections and difficulties which is ever haunting the study of the question of the forgiveness of sin. We get rid of that erroneous notion that man offers to God a propitiation. It is just the opposite—God sent His Son to be the propitiation. We get rid also of that erroneous notion, which has greatly darkened and saddened the Christian life and teaching, that in some way Christ, the gentle and gracious Saviour, propitiated God, the harsh and stern Judge: we get rid of it because "*God* was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." And dwelling upon this point, that God initiated it all, we come to see that the real distinction between the Christian Gospel and the other ideas and systems of religion lies in that very thought. Apart from God in Christ, the notion has always been that we must propitiate Him; but when God in Christ visits the world, the discovery is made that God has set forth Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. By dwelling upon this point we get rid of the false analogies and the false illustrations which are constantly leading us astray. The sacrifices that are offered in the several religions of the world are not the real illumination or interpretation of the Cross of Christ: the Cross of Christ takes their place; it is a substitution

of God's way in His Son for man's way by the methods of sacrifice. And even when we speak of the Old Testament sacrifices as being the interpretation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be very careful to remember that we must not limit the Atonement of our Lord by the Old Testament sacrifices. They are not the interpretation; they are only the type, the symbol, the shadow, of the substance that was to come; whenever you attempt to make the Atonement a mere transcript of the Old Testament sacrifices you undo the Atonement and you throw it back on the system which has passed away, the shadow of that which was to come. And, strictly speaking, the only sense in which the Old Testament sacrifices are a great help to Christians is when we insist on the fact that those sacrifices were ordained by God *as a shadow*. Directly you begin to dwell on the notion that those sacrifices were offerings which men were making for themselves, and that their rams and bullocks brought to God in some way propitiated God, you get all wrong—you go right back into heathenism. But you can use the symbol wisely and well and see the foreshadowing of the great thought, when you realize that God is instructing man, and instructing Israel, by the method of sacrifices, instructing man to understand that he has *nothing* that he can offer—for the very cattle and sheep that he offers are the Lord's to start with; he must learn that, if

he is to be saved, God must do it; if a propitiation is to be offered, God must offer it. I lay stress upon this, and I want to get it graven upon our minds, not only because it is the starting-point of all real understanding of the Christian doctrine of Atonement, but also because it gets rid of those hindrances of thought and of reason which are constantly preventing men from coming to Christ, as if the Atonement of the New Testament were only a kind of judicial transaction, or as if it were a sacrifice of the same kind as that of beasts, on a little higher scale, a substitute of the innocent for the guilty, in a word, an unreality which cannot touch the conscience or the heart.

When we have put this first point clearly to our minds, the next thing is to ask, What is that human situation, that condition of the human heart, and that frailty of the human life, which makes an Atonement of God necessary? But when we ask what is wrong with mankind, as you know, there is only one way of answering the question—it is by asking, What is it that is wrong with me? You can never get deeper into human hearts than you can get into your own; and, strictly speaking, you never understand humanity except so far as you understand yourself. But learn what is wrong with you, and we are so truly *one*, that you know what is wrong with the rest. If I state, for example, to you, from my own experience, what I know

is the secret, or what is the difficulty, of my spiritual life, I shall be describing exactly what you feel, and we shall together be describing what humanity feels. We are all one: men, differing as they do from one another, are all alike as men. The question, What is the matter with mankind? is not so difficult as at first sight it appears—it is equivalent to, What is the matter with me?

Now I tell you what is the matter with you by telling you what is the matter with me. What is the situation of my life which constitutes a problem, which demands the Atonement, the strange fact which lies at the root of all religion? What is sin? What is it that is wrong in me? I tell you what is wrong with me in this way: The first thing that is wrong with me is that I have done what I ought not to have done, that I have committed things which I know, and even *knew*, were wrong. And what makes this peculiarly terrible is, that what I have done I never can undo. The evil that I did passed out into the universe with an influence, the extent of which I can never measure, and the force of which I can never arrest. Just as, pulsing out from this Sun, goes the light which is reaching the nearest fixed star, in the Centaur, after three and a half years' travelling, and then will go on and on, reaching different systems years and centuries after, so the sin I committed was as a little ray of lurid light: it passed out into an

.

infinite universe, travelled, and is travelling, through space. I can never arrest it, and I can never undo it. It is done, and is attached to me, as the doer, for ever.

There is a tragic fact in our English literature which very forcibly illustrates what I mean. One of our greatest Elizabethan poets was John Donne, who in his later life, as Dean of St. Paul's, was the most eloquent and powerful preacher of his time. It was always observed that in his preaching and life there was a vein of melancholy that nothing seemed to relieve. And the reason of that melancholy was this, that in his early life he had written poems, and they were published, which were stained with the licentiousness of the time. He knew that those poems could never be recalled: and they have not been recalled; they are still printed in every great edition of English poetry; they still carry their taint and their ruin into the reader's heart. There are young men and girls who read John Donne's poems to-day, and who are injured by them; and John Donne, the great preacher, knew that he could never recall those poems of his creation. They live by virtue of their genius, and they carry vice because their moral putrescence is quickened by their literary power. And, therefore, into all John Donne's preaching there naturally came the horror of this dread truth, that he had done what he could never undo, and, as far as he could judge, he must influence pos-

terity, not as the preacher of righteousness, but as the writer of corrupt and corrupting poems.

Now that is the same with you and with me. We have not written great poems, but all our actions are poems that we cannot undo, and they pass out into the facts of the world and become part of the texture of human life; that which we have *done* cannot be undone. And, strange to say, this illustration which I give you by the very name of the man, will remind you of the point—he was John Donne—or Done—done and it cannot be undone—the evil that I have committed is an eternal fact.

Of course I do not deny that it is easy to forget the evil which we have done in the past. We forget it. But it is an illusion to suppose that what we have forgotten has ceased to be. So far from that, everything that we have done, and even everything that we have thought, is in a mysterious way bound up in the tissue of our being, and will all come back to us. It is as much there as at the moment when it was done. This deed of mine—it will rise upon me in the darkness of the night, like the ghastly face of a drowned man on the surface of the pool, when the moonbeam falls upon it. It was forgotten, but it is always there.

Now that is the first point of humanity's difficulty—I say “my own,” but I mean “Man’s.”

The second point is this, that, even supposing I could get rid of the past, and could undo

what is done, there yet remains the melancholy fact that I have no prospect of making the future essentially better than the past has been. Wherever I strike my life I find that it is impotent for future goodness. The times after my best resolutions are often the most melancholy records of failure. It is after long years of good resolutions and after many attempts to do well, that there comes over me the most miserable and overwhelming sense of the ill that I have done. I turn a new page of the book of life and it is white. I begin to write on it, and I think I can write on it what I will; but alas! as I write the very warmth and the pressure seem to bring out on the page the old stains that have been written in invisible ink! So that, while the past haunts me for what cannot be undone, the future gives me no hope—no hope; I see only that the future will be a tissue of failure similar to the past, and that at the end of life I shall feel exactly as I do to-day—only with the accumulated years added—that I have done nothing that is good, have left the good undone, and have done that which is evil.

That is the tragedy of human life. And, as if that were not bad enough, the worst feature is to come. This is the worst, that, supposing that I could undo what I have done, and could now start and do well, yet, if I did well, and if I began to feel that my well-doing was a sound foundation on which to rest; if, in a word, I did

well enough to feel in any sense comforted and consoled, immediately I should fall into that self-consciousness and self-satisfaction which I can easily perceive in others, and therefore know in myself, to be one of the worst and most disastrous of human sins. I should escape the guilt of the Publican, simply to fall into the sin of the Pharisee!

That is what I take to be the description of my own condition, and, if you will examine it, if you will think over your own life, you will see that it is yours. It is always the same: the past cannot be undone, the future seems to present no prospect of the power to be better; and, worst of all, if any good *were* done, it would be rapidly tainted by that consciousness of merit which is one of the worst of human sins.

Now, as I have described to you what is really the condition of the human heart, the standing difficulty of human life, let me point out, that the way that religions and systems of human thought have tried to meet the situation is almost always—always except in one instance, that of Mahometanism—a method of this kind—they all of them say, “Now you must do good; you must be good; you must, by your merit, undo the past and deserve better in the future.” That is the universal counsel of all religions except Mahometanism, and Mahometanism has this peculiarity, that it does not even propose that you should do good. It says, “Your evil does not

matter"—you perceive how very popular and widespread Mahometanism is in England; you may say it is the most popular religion in this country! The whole point in Mahometanism is this, "God is so merciful, He will not be angry with His poor child because he sins." There goes the man to his vile corruptions, his impurities, his lusts, his defilements, with a prayer upon his lips: he rises from his knees, from where he has spread his prayer-cloth to worship Allah, to perpetrate the most daring iniquities, because Allah is merciful, too good to punish His poor child! The consequence, of course, is that wherever Mahomet is the prophet, and where Mahometanism prevails, a widespread corruption of life takes place, and the hope of the world is gone. But, with that exception, the religions of the world always say to the sinful heart, to the heart that is conscious of its sin, just what I have described. The old poets of the Vedas are uttering the cries that come from my heart to-day—"Oh, Varuna!" they cry to the overspreading heaven, "how shall I cleanse me from my sins?" And there in the old Book of the Dead, which gives us the religion of the ancient Egyptians, is the same penetrating cry. They know that, just beyond the gates of death, the souls of men are brought to the judgment-seat of Osiris, and their good and evil are weighed in the balances and, according to the good or the evil, their future destiny is determined. All

religions know that man is sinful, all the hearts of men are crying to be delivered; but these religions have but one prescription, and it is always the same, a mockery of the very state that I have been describing; they say, "Be good; break off your sins by almsgiving or by something else; make atonement. And as you get better your old sins will be forgiven, and you will get so good that no more sins will be committed." And then—what then? Then you will be so conscious of merit and so joyful in the sense of your virtues, that, like a Buddhist Lama, you will go up into the presence of God comforted, with all this merit to offer, on the ground of which you may be forgiven! And then—God will hold up the merit of the life, and behold, it is filthy rags—the life of the Buddhist Lama!

The world's religions do not meet the great personal need of the soul. They say either, "Don't trouble about sin," and then sin destroys you; or they say, "Get rid of sin by being good," and you cannot; or, if they persuade you that you are good, your goodness becomes as it were self-righteousness and filthy rags in consequence—"Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men."

Do you see, then, what it is that the Gospel did or does? Do you see the meaning of my text—the revolution it means in religious thought, the power that is brought into sinful hearts—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto

Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them—God has set forth His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, that He might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth on Him”? Do you see what it means? Oh that I had tongue and power to present it to you! What is it that that Cross of Jesus means? What is it that the Gospel brings to the world? *God* is in Christ. Look you, God is there; listen, God is speaking. What He says there, in Christ, is this: “If you believe on Christ, My Son, then this shall happen—your deeds that you cannot undo shall be *undone*; I will arrest those pulsing waves of consequence that were passing out from you into the regions beyond—I will arrest—there, I do arrest them”! What does He say to you? “He that believeth in Him”—where faith centres on Jesus, *power* comes—new life—“out of him shall flow rivers of living water.” Impotence goes, and a new world opens—a possibility of real life begins. What does He say? He that believeth on Jesus, on the Son of God, shall not suffer from the disease of self-consciousness or the sense of merit, because this is a gift; this is God’s propitiation; this is what *He* does, not what you do, and therefore there shall be no room for boasting. Your goodness, coming actually from God, does not seem to you a virtue or a merit before God; all that is precluded, and precluded essentially and for ever. “He that believeth on Him” receives a righteousness of

which he is not tempted to boast. His sins are forgiven freely, and not by what he has done, and therefore he that believeth in Jesus Christ is pardoned, is saved, and is, above all, saved from the snare and danger of self-satisfaction, the notion that by his merits he can be commended to God. *God* was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to them their transgressions.

Now, are you reconciled to God? Have you come to Christ and received that pardon and that power and that purification? Have you come? Do you come? Even now *will* you come? Then, as you come, He has committed to you that word of reconciliation for you to deliver to others—it is the glad tidings—it is the great deliverance.

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming Love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

We are reconciled to God. The word of reconciliation is put into our lips, and we will deliver it. Your heart will burn with love to reconcile the world to Him, to speak the word which contains the power of atonement.

Oh, receive that word and give it out, and let your life be the glad proclamation of His ministry—the ministry of reconciliation—to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

II

MAN'S NEED OF ATONEMENT

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."—HEB. ix. 28.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews has been described by Professor A. B. Bruce as the first Christian apology for Christianity. It was an apology addressed to the Jews in order to show to them how the new faith would live with the old; and when we are speaking about the Atonement this Epistle to the Hebrews is also the *last* Christian apology—an apology directed to thinking people, to show that the Atonement, which is the centre of the Christian revelation, is also in perfect harmony with our best and most vital thought.

We have seen the situation that had to be met if the world was to be saved. I have reminded you of that threefold condition in which every man finds himself—"I have done wrong which I cannot undo; I have no power to do better in the future; or if I *could* do better I should at once fall into the worst of all sins, the sin of self-complacency." To meet that condition of human life the other religions of the world had proved inoperative, but that condition was met by the truth of the Gospel, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," and

that "He set forth His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

We naturally enquire, How did the offering of Christ constitute the propitiation for the sins of the world? Now, when we put that question we must be prepared to find that a completely satisfactory answer cannot be given, because things that touch the soul, like the soul itself, are a mystery which eludes analysis. We are told of this particular mystery, that the angels desired to look into it, and it is implied that even angelic intelligence is baffled by it; you must not therefore be surprised if our intelligence is baffled. The last and most difficult of the sciences is psychology, and the man who can define the vital principle within us will be the man, perhaps, who can explain the Atonement; but that man has not yet appeared. I say that all things connected with the soul itself are mysteries, in the sense that they elude our grasp and defy our analysis. Sin is a mystery; goodness is a greater mystery still. Life, whether physical or spiritual, is a mystery; and forgiveness, in any deep and practical sense, is an insoluble mystery. You must, therefore, always be prepared to find that when we are told that God set forth His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, it may be possible for us to take it as a truth of feeling, and a truth of experience, and yet we may not be able to furnish an analysis and explanation of it sufficient to meet all objections. In

fact, we may well be compelled to say about this as the young lover said about his love—

“Let no one ask me how it came to pass.
It seems that I am happy, that for me
A greener emerald twinkles in the grass,
A bluer sapphire melts into the sea.”

But while we would caution one another against expecting an explanation that would be in excess of the explanations that we get about the mysteries of our existence, this apology of the Epistle to the Hebrews (presenting to us that propitiation for sin, which is the substance, in comparison with the sacrificial systems, which were the mere shadow), offers us such explanation as is possible. And it gives us the explanation by bringing out distinctly the point in which the real propitiation differs from those imperfect and shadowy propitiations which have occupied the religions of mankind; and that distinction, so vital and yet so simple, is expressed in the verses of this chapter from which my text is taken. My text itself, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,” still uses the language of the older religions. “Christ was once offered” much in the same way as bulls and goats and sheep had been offered before. But when you look back into the chapter you see that in the 14th verse (as in chaps. vii. 27 and viii. 2), our writer had interpreted the statement that “Christ was once offered” in this way,

“Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,” so that what he lays down as the distinctive principle of the real propitiation, vitally marking it off from all ideas of propitiation that had preceded, is that in this case the offering offered *Himself*. He shows that the meaning of it must be sought partly in the fact that it was voluntary, and partly in the fact that the offering was without sin, or without blemish. And of course it becomes obvious immediately that the word “without blemish,” in the Greek *ἄμωμος*, which was given to the animals offered in the ancient sacrifices, acquires an infinitely deeper significance when it is applied to Jesus Christ.

Now, when we come to look reverently—rather let me say, when we come to meditate upon this twofold truth of my text, viz., that the essence of the propitiation is that Christ offered *Himself*, and that He who offered Himself was *sinless*—I say, when we come to meditate upon it, begin to think it out and get down into its secret, we find, to begin with, that all the false notions derived from the Tabernacle and the Temple, and the still more false notions derived from the Roman Law Courts, and retaliatory notions of justice, fall away. We make the discovery that what is presented to us as the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is a principle so intelligible, so rational, and so morally satisfying, that we can literally say that it is in

harmony with all the best we can know or think of God, and the world, and the soul.

The two points, then, on which we will concentrate our thoughts for a moment are these—*first*, the statement, “Christ was offered,” interpreted by the statement, “He offered Himself”; and *second*, the virtue of that self-offering. On these two points I will offer only a very few remarks, because it is not so much what I say as what each of us reflects on in quiet which makes this thing intelligible and valuable to us.

We take the statement, “Christ was offered,” and we find the key to it in the Epistle, “Christ offered Himself.” Now, externally viewed, the offering on the Cross was no more voluntary than the death of the animals on the altar at Jerusalem: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.” And, externally viewed, the offering on the Cross was not an intentional sacrifice for sin. The men who carried Jesus to Calvary had no such thought in their minds; and even the saying of Caiaphas as it is recorded for us, “It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not,” is, we understand, a kind of cryptic oracle which the speaker himself did not comprehend. Externally viewed, the sacrifice on the Cross was not voluntary, and it was not an offering made with the intention of a sacrifice to God at all.

But now here comes the inspired truth of this Epistle. What the Epistle says is, You cannot

view this thing externally. Externally viewed, this will never be intelligible to you. The whole point of it is that it is something *inward*, something eternal; you will see it through "the Eternal Spirit." It is something that is to be interpreted on the side of the Spirit and in the terms not of time but of eternity—that is to say, the whole transaction there upon the Cross does not consist in its external features, but in the intention and purpose of the Sufferer who there died. Everything turns, therefore, upon this point, that, whatever the sinful hands of men were doing to Him, He offered Himself, and further, that He who offered Himself was without spot and sinless.

See what an interpretation this is of the truth of the Gospel. Let slip out of your mind those false ideas which have discredited the Atonement and kept thousands of souls from coming to Christ. You see, there is no question of submitting to the wrath of God. There is no thought, not the remotest thought, of a quantitative punishment inflicted upon the Lord to equal the sins of all mankind. The whole thing is on a different plane altogether. You confuse it, you destroy it, by bringing in these feeble, transitory thoughts of time. It is "through the Eternal Spirit." The offering, the self-offering of Christ, is of this character:—it is the offering of a sinless person; when the Prince of the World came to Him at the end of His life, He

says "he found nothing in me"; it is the offering of a sinless person; but it is *this* kind of offering—an unreserved submission to the holy will of God, a submission which goes all lengths—goes the length of death, goes the length of the shameful death of the Cross—an *absolute* submission of the spirit to God, the righteous, holy, and loving Father—a self-giving which is perfect, a submission, a self-surrender which represents *absolute* holiness and obedience. A life which is faultless now endures a death that is torture, in order that it may be *completely* offered to the Divine and Holy Maker of Man.

And what is insisted on, of course, is this, that such a self-offering, such a presentation, on earth and in human form, of a perfect and unconditional self-surrender, prompted by love for sinful men, is a sacrifice which has such virtue that we may say of it, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the *sin* of the world."

But now let us for a moment dwell upon the virtue in it. What is the virtue in it? And I must remind you that in the spiritual and eternal world a thing which from our point of view is very tiny, may be of infinite significance; that is to say, it is quite intelligible, when you understand what the Spirit is, and what God is, that the obedience of Jesus Christ may, in God's eyes, outweigh the disobedience of all the world; the perfect obedience of Christ may in this scale weigh down all the sin and outrages of humanity

from the beginning to the end. Love covers a multitude of sins; this love may cover all sins. It is, of course, very difficult to estimate these spiritual values and equivalences, and explain them in human language, but I give an illustration or two which may bring it home to you. You know how sometimes in a soul which is otherwise worthless, you discover a little jet of pure feeling; and, looking at that defiled soul, you seem to see that little jet of pure feeling atoning for it all. It is a *tiny* thing, but, in the spiritual world, of infinite significance. You know, again, how a life that has been for the most part selfish and self-seeking, will suddenly and unexpectedly become capable of a noble self-sacrifice. For instance, in that familiar poem of the American poet describing the death of the steersman on the Mississippi—the man a rough, blaspheming sort of man, who stood at the wheel and brought the ship to land when it was all on fire; the crew were saved, and the passengers were saved, but he died; you remember how the poet says at the end that God is not going to be hard upon the man who died for men. And you recognize the intrinsic truth of that; you see that a little virtue, a little sacrifice, a little love, has a marvellous power of spreading over the whole world and covering a multitude of sins.

Take an instance in history. When the monk, Telemachus, plunged into the gladiatorial games

at the Colosseum and died, bringing those gladiatorial shows for ever to an end, what an extraordinary effect it produced! When I stand in that vast ring of the Colosseum and contemplate the tiers of seats and the arena where those deeds of blood were wrought, I cannot think of all the tortures and atrocities for thinking of that monk Telemachus—his little deed of sacrifice and death literally covers up and blots out the whole tale of the tragedies of the Colosseum.

Or when we read a little while ago of the life and sacrifice of Damien in ministering to the lepers—a life laid down for the lepers—it seemed to us all as if that justified the existence of leprosy from the beginning, as if the whole mystery of that dark suffering of the human body is explained by the fact that a man, for love's sake, will die to minister to the lepers.

I cannot stop to give more illustrations, but these are enough just to remind you, that when we begin to look at things from the standpoint of the eternal and the spiritual, a very trifling point may be of infinite significance; it may expand over the whole world, and cover and change the whole course of time; while the great events which occupy so much of our ears and of our eyes during our earthly life may, as we often say, "dwindle to a point," and be absolutely meaningless and worthless. The whole history of the Assyrian Empire, the whole bloody tale of Babylon, is not worth a straw—it is all

gone. But a little deed of love never goes; it blots out a multitude of sins, it saves a world; a little deed of love wrought "through the Eternal Spirit."

Now this is what I mean by the virtue of this self-offering of Jesus. As I gaze on this, and as the mists begin to clear, and I see the great Altar rising between heaven and earth, the Cross on which my Saviour died, and as in faith I lay my hand on that dear head of His, I realize not only that by this faith in Him I am pardoned and saved, but also that there is plentiful redemption in that blood which has been shed, and that every human being, the whole multitude of mankind from the beginning to the end, might lay their hand on that dear head of His and be forgiven too. I realize that when He, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God, *there* was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and because I am forgiven for His sake, the *world* can be forgiven; and into our mouth is put the word of this reconciliation, the message that is to be preached. And as it thus flashes upon me what that message is, it seems to me that there is nothing else worth doing—that in our brief life there is hardly time to attempt anything else—than just to pass on the glad tidings, to *tell* men everywhere to repent and to believe, because Jesus Christ was offered for the sins of the world, and whosoever believeth in Him *is* forgiven.

III

MAN MADE ATONEMENTS

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”—I PETER ii. 24.

THERE is an extraordinary distaste in our time for the idea that Christ bore our sins, or was made sin (*i.e.*, a sin-offering) for us. That the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, or that with His stripes we are healed, is regarded as either meaningless or offensive. These familiar passages of the New Testament are therefore slurred over or treated (to use Carlyle's expression) as “Hebrew old clothes.”

But this repulsion of feeling is assuredly due to forgetting the situation which makes a doctrine of atonement necessary. We are indeed all apt, in the general though vague diffusion of religious light derived from the Cross, to overlook the torturing uncertainty in which the human mind is left by nature on points which are essential to peace and to salvation, and to deny the Cross from which the light came.

The actual situation is this: *There is the greatest difficulty in knowing that God is willing, or even able, to forgive sin.* Or if there is a readi-

ness to believe that He can or will forgive sin, there is a danger on the opposite side: *Forgiveness is made possible by treating sin as trivial and therefore venial.*

Let us for a moment leave out of account the Christian revelation, and try to look the facts straight in the face—our need, our ignorance, our uncertainty.

How should we know that God can or will forgive sin? There is nothing in Nature which suggests forgiveness. All there is inexorable law. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," seems to be the legend written over everything. Indeed, Nature punishes not only grave sins, but even trifling offences. A man touches poison and he dies; he slips on the mountain-side and is dashed to pieces. The various religions of the world cannot get hold of the idea of *forgiveness*; the utmost they can reach is the idea of passing over transgressions and remitting punishment. And such forgiveness has no saving power. As Westcott says: "The forgiveness which remits a punishment may leave the heart untouched. The forgiveness which remits a sin includes by its very nature the return of responsive gratitude."¹ And even when they get the idea of passing over or blotting out sins, as, for example, certain great passages of the Old Testament (Mic. vii., 18; Jer. l., 20), there is no proof,

¹ "The Victory of the Cross," p. 85.

no solid evidence, on which the fact may rest; consequently it appears to be merely the optimistic assertion of a belief, a thought which results from a wish.

We should have the courage to face this conclusion in all its breadth and in its searching anguish. We are naturally in a state of complete agnosticism concerning the forgiveness of sins, not only its actuality, but even its possibility. For aught we know by nature, sin must work out its due retribution, and if its punishment is death (as it seems to be) we must, as sinful, die.

It is not astonishing therefore that men, and even certain religious teachers, seek relief by trying to minimize sin. We have seen how Islam treats sin; the Merciful One overlooks it. He pities the weakness of men, and refrains from punishing. This is a natural and common attitude of the human mind. We give sin an euphemistic name: It is a defect; it is the shadow cast by the light; it is the growing pain of the soul; it is a fall upwards. And so on. This Moslem view of life is the refuge into which the human race is always running. We picture an easy God who will not be too hard upon us. We excuse sin by giving it another name. We console ourselves in our depravity by saying that God made us and He is responsible. We become fatalists, pantheists, practical atheists.

But it is better to be in torturing suspense as to whether God can or will forgive, than to escape discomfort by saying, and then believing, that sin is not sin. The worst thing that can happen to man is to believe that God is not holy, to get the idea that sin is included in His plan, and is therefore a reflection of Himself. The great achievement of the Hebrew religion was the growing conviction that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Salvation dawns upon men when they realize that God cannot away with sin, and that only by being rid of sin can they ever enjoy God.

Modern, easy-going theories are no better than the laxity of Islam. They look in the same direction, they lead to the same result.

The easy-going God, who does not visit men for sin, is merely a creation of the sinful imagination. Such a God has no reality, nor is he of any more value than an idol of Juggernaut or Siva.

Here, then, we begin to see the extent and seriousness of the problem. Men cannot *know* that God forgives sin, and by their best imaginings they only get rid of sin by assuming that it does not matter; and that means not to get rid of it at all. Sin remains as a fact when it is denied in name. It goes on working its deadly results in the suffering and degradation of mankind, the corruption of human society, the retrogression of the race.

Now what the apostolic witnesses saw in the Cross of Christ was an amazing and dazzling solution of this problem which baffled and baffles mankind. The fact that they saw the solution of the problem there made them preach the Cross with an exulting confidence. Their interpretation of it is formulated in the very phrases to which the modern mind, forgetting the problem, takes exception. Instead of optimistic theories, instead of prophetic rhapsodies, which could not be verified, they saw a solid fact, revealing God and His thought, which was the solution of the problem.

The fact of the Cross presented God as condemning and yet forgiving sin in one and the same act; condemning it, that the forgiveness might be seen to be a real forgiveness, and forgiving it because it was condemned.

They saw the condemnation of sin in the voluntary suffering of the Sinless One. Because he could say: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" or "The Prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in Me"; and yet he went to Gethsemane and Calvary, died the death of the worst criminal, bore the utmost contumely and reprobation, passed through the ultimate suffering, even the sense of being forsaken by God, they concluded that *God was uttering on the Cross His absolute condemnation of sin*. All the sufferings that fall upon sin in all the world, in all time, are of God's infliction. The Cross

expresses the eternal truth, God's unyielding judgment on sin. The soul that sins shall die. God, the Holy One, does not relax, cannot overlook, sin; it has become exceeding sinful. If the word "forgiveness" is breathed, it is not to be understood as making light of sin, or lessening its heinousness. Nay, on the contrary, it must be regarded as a miracle of grace, because sin is in itself unpardonable.

Yet these apostolic witnesses heard that word "forgiveness" breathed from the Cross. Yes, they were as sure of this as they were of the condemnation that was passed on sin. Forgiveness! Every one who entered into the fact that was there transacted was at once condemned and forgiven. There forgiveness acquired the height and the depth of its meaning from the absoluteness of the condemnation of sin. There the horror and the guilt of sin were revealed by the unspeakable sufferings of the sinless One.

Here, then, the apostolic witnesses saw the solution of the problem which perplexed and puzzled the world. Their proclamation of it constituted a Gospel, an Evangel, a New Testament, the immediate and sufficient Way of salvation.

It cannot be denied that the New Testament presents this double aspect of the Cross and shows it to be at once the condemnation and forgiveness of sin. Nor can it be denied that this is just what man needed and needs. We need, not a theory, nor a hope, but some tangible

event which demonstrates that God at once condemns sin and forgives it; that He wills to do both; that He can do both. And we are led to see in the Cross of Christ God doing both in one act, and so presenting to mankind the propitiation for the sin of the world, and the means of bringing man to Himself.

Nothing else does this but the Cross; the Cross as preached by the apostles does this.

Now we only turn to the Cross and find its saving efficacy when we realize how we need this, and know how useless it is to search for it anywhere else. Let us, therefore, urge on the reader our need of this. Let us take first our need of recognizing God's condemnation of sin, and then our need of knowing that He forgives it; so that we may see the necessity of the Cross, which establishes both positions and brings them together in one.

1. *You need the conviction that God condemns sin.* For though it is soothing to be assured that sin does not much matter, that is a paregoric rather than a medicine. The soothing effect does not last. You cannot rest content with the assurance that your sin is insignificant, and that God does not care; for presently the thought that God does not care, and that He is altogether such an one as yourself, becomes a nightmare of horror. To think that God regards with indifference your lusts and passions, your egotism and pride, your lies and hypocrisies, your

selfishness, your envy, your jealousy, your hate, your greed—to think that your sinful heart represents the best and greatest in the universe—this is not a lasting consolation. In a moment it becomes tormenting. The time inevitably arrives when you cry out: “Oh! however bad I am, let God be good. Let me believe that God is holy, though He slay me. Let God be true, though every man be a liar.” We must come to this eventually, for otherwise we should have to contemplate not hell in the universe, but the universe as hell.

It is therefore evident, whenever we give it serious thought, that our greatest concern is to be sure that sin is sin, and that God absolutely condemns it. There lies the only hope of deliverance from it; the only impulse for seeking such deliverance.

There is, we may admit, a moment in the conception of sin, when it is sweet and seductive to the taste. And in that moment we may wish to think that God overlooks it. But sin, when it is conceived, brings forth torment and death; it is only another name for hell. In the long run, therefore, even the worst sinner wants to know that God condemns it; that it is a blot and an excrescence on the universe, and that God is concerned to eliminate it.

The preaching which makes light of sin has a momentary popularity. The debauchee on the way to indulgence, the swindler contriving his

fraud, the egotist feeding his self-importance, finds it to his taste. He would for the occasion believe it. But in the long run the preaching which grips and satisfies the human heart is that which shows unsparingly the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which enables men to see their own condition under the condemnation of God, which wrings from their agonized hearts, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" and, "God be merciful to me a sinner." No one, except for brief moments of illusion, wishes to have sin overlooked; all of us wish to know that God condemns it.

2. *But we do wish to have sin forgiven.* Yes, in our truest moments, when we have come to ourselves, we human beings have but one cry: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Our most pressing and urgent need is forgiveness. To be assured of that is to be saved.

I will give you an allegory of all humanity in a simple fact recorded by Dr. Chamberlain. He was preaching at Benares by the sacred river, when a devotee who had journeyed for miles on knees and elbows came to the Ganges to wash away his sins. He made his prayer to Ganga, and crept into the water. But coming out a moment later he found the old pain, after all his toils and sufferings, still tugging at his heart.

He lay down on the bank in despair. Then he heard the missionary's voice, raised himself, crawled nearer. It was the wondrous story of the Cross; how Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree; how God condemns sin and forgives it in Christ.

That Hindoo devotee was hungry and thirsty for that truth. He had felt the problem and the difficulty of its solution. He rose to his feet, and cried, "That's what I want!" That is an allegory of God and man and the Cross.

We need forgiveness, the knowledge of it, the sense of it. It is a spiritual necessity for us to be assured, not that our sins do not matter, but that, bad as they are, they are forgiven; not that God makes light of them, and is far too merciful to punish them, but that He thinks of them as we do ourselves, and knows the plague of our hearts as we know it, and yet is able and willing to forgive. We want to hear the voice of God speaking clearly to our souls, personally, to us as by name: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Though they were as scarlet, they are whiter than snow; though they were red like crimson, they are as wool. Go and sin no more."

And this is what the fact of the Cross gives us. There, by faith in Christ, we see and know that our sins are condemned and forgiven. There, humbled to the dust, like the publican, we beat upon our breasts, and cry out to God; but

there, pardoned, cleansed, and healed, we begin to rejoice with a joy unspeakable, and then we go down to our house justified.

And as this is the definite and experienced result of the Cross, so we may say with confidence, that this particular result—which alone is a true and spiritual salvation—is not attained elsewhere, in any doctrine or discipline, in any philosophy or religion. No, nor can we even conceive how elsewhere or otherwise it could be obtained. How can we know God's mind on this matter, unless He reveal it to us? And how could He reveal it to us, except by His Son becoming flesh and dying the death of the Cross? At any rate, it is nowhere else revealed. How could we be assured of His mind, when His thought was such a paradox as this: at once the condemnation and the forgiveness of sins? We cannot even theoretically suggest a demonstration other than that which is given. The one half of the truth, the condemnation of sin, might be shown in the suffering and death of the sinful world; and the other half of the truth, the forgiveness, might be shown in the redeemed life of another and a sinless world. But how, here in the world of men, as we know them, could we be convinced that God, the eternal, invisible God, at once condemns our sins and forgives them freely, makes us realize the guilt of departing from Him, and yet gives us the rapture of reconciliation to Him?

What other way could there be than that which He took? What other foundation could there be than that which is laid? There is no other name, no other way, or truth or life. His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

IV

THE ATONEMENT OF THE CROSS

"The church which He purchased with His own blood."—ACTS xx. 28.

THERE is in the modern world a great distaste for the figure of blood, in the doctrine of redemption. To the Jews the greatest difficulty lay in the offence of the Cross. We have become aware of the ideal and transcendental meaning of that term of reproach; but our difficulty lies in the offence of the Blood.

It must be owned that religious enthusiasm, taking the Blood in a strictly spiritual sense, has sometimes elaborated the physical details with a heedlessness which does constitute an offence.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains,"

is an image which is beautifully and gloriously true, when the spiritual meaning is understood. But as an image it is gross and extravagant. A refined taste as well as a religious sensibility may well protest against the idea of a fountain flow-

ing from the veins of a corpse, and may take exception to the materialism which connects the washing of the soul with the physical death of a body. But the repulsion to this term in Scripture (I will not attempt to defend the extravagances of hymnology and homiletics) is due to the misuse of figurative language. Directly we venture to press for a definite answer to the question, what is meant by the blood, and begin to see the truth which is described under that metaphor, the offence is removed. For the offence arises only from a stupid and unimaginative literalism.

Now, what is meant by the blood in this connection is our Lord's offering of Himself in the death of the Cross, which is, as we have seen, the Atonement. The key to the use of the term is given in that treatise which interprets the Jewish types in terms of spiritual reality: "The blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God" (Heb. ix. 14). The term "Blood of Christ" is merely a convenient abbreviation for the full phrase, "The offering of Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish unto God." It is, as it were, an agreed cipher to cover a large, and sufficiently understood, fact. Wherever in the New Testament we read of Christ's blood, we are at liberty (where the word "blood" is an offence, we are compelled) to substitute the phrase which is its true interpretation. When Peter says that we are redeemed not with silver

or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (i. Peter i. 19), we ought to read, "We are redeemed not by material or physical things at all, but by Christ's offering of Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish unto God." Or when John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," we ought to say, "What cleanses us from all sin, and constitutes the propitiation, is Christ's offering of Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish unto God."

Once realize that we are dealing with a metaphor, and that the underlying sense of the metaphor is made very plain in the New Testament, and the offence ceases. For, if what has been said in the foregoing pages carries any conviction, we must be convinced that the self-offering of our Lord on the Cross is the one sure ground of our pardon and the effectual instrument of our cleansing. That offering may therefore be symbolically represented as the blood which purchases our pardon, the redeeming blood, and the blood which washes us from sin, the cleansing blood. But we must bear in mind the absurdity of pressing metaphorical language, of losing the facts which it symbolically represents, and of riding off on inferences and deductions drawn from the mere language, the image out of connection with the fact which it typifies.

But why use this metaphor of the blood at all? The answer is that it was used in the first preaching of the Gospel, because Jews especially, and Gentiles to some extent, were able to understand it by their familiarity with sacrifices of animals offered to God in expiation for sin, and as a means of communion with Him. The idea was so ancient, and so unquestioned, in the mind of the Jew, that it no longer offered any ground of offence. It seemed to him that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin.

When, therefore, his eyes opened to the transcendent truth that Christ purchased for us the remission of sin by His sacrifice of Himself through the Eternal Spirit, it was as obvious, as it was to him offenceless, to refer to that redeeming death as the shedding of Christ's blood.

The Lamb offered morning and evening in the Temple was so settled a background of all religious life in Israel, that a Jewish preacher wishing to set forth Christ could do nothing more significant than to describe Him as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, or the Lamb which had been slain before the foundation of the world. The blood of the Lamb was to him not a repulsive image, but an epitome of the deepest religious experiences of his nation. When the great spiritual fact of Christ's sacrifice was revealed, the fact in which all the yearnings of the older religion were realized, it was the most sacred and the most tender thing that

he could say, to declare that Christ was the Lamb, that His death was the offering, and that His blood was the cleansing.

And to a mind which is prepared for the message of Christ by a close study of the Old Testament, the blood is no more an offence than it was to a Jew. Our fathers were imbued with the Old Testament typology and ideas. They approached the Cross with the language and the feeling of Jews who had been accustomed to the institution of the Tabernacle and of the Temple.

The offence arises for a generation that knows not Moses, for minds that so far from being imbued with the Old Testament religion, are in imperfect sympathy with it. What formerly was an illuminating type has become a scandal and a stumbling-block. The phrase "Blood of Christ" which once stirred deep and sacred associations, now strikes the mind in the naked repulsiveness of an uninterpreted image. Many are kept from Christ by the unthinking reiteration of the phrase "The blood of Christ."

Under these circumstances we have two alternatives open to us. Either we must renew instruction in Old Testament, Semitic, and even Hellenic, religion, in order that the mind may approach the idea of the blood with a historic preparation—we may gain the historic sense, and imbued with the ideas of the time in which Christ came, we may understand sympathetically the

language, in which He was first commended by Jews to Jews—or we may seek to pierce to the inner meaning of the metaphor, and dropping the metaphor, which has now become of merely antiquarian interest, we may endeavor to convey the religious truth of the Cross in those psychological and spiritual terms which appeal to the modern mind, as the sacrifices and rights of the altar appealed to antiquity.

The first, or conservative, alternative, is chosen by the majority of evangelical Churches. By careful insistence on the *præparatio evangelica* in Judaism, and elaborate and complete study of the whole Bible, multitudes are constantly brought to an appreciation of the Cross, and they can use the language of the New Testament about the blood without any shock, and with a deep and rich appreciation.

But it is evident that this first alternative does not commend itself to the modern mind as a whole. It is therefore our duty to consider the other. We may have to forego the use of the word "blood" in order to force attention on to the truth for which it stood. We may be content to surrender familiar language, and to seek the terms in which the truth can come home with fresh and original power.

In pursuit of this method let us see how light breaks in when we habitually substitute for the word "blood" the idea which it is intended to express. We see the death of Christ on the

Cross as the voluntary offering of Himself in absolute and loving obedience to the Father; we see that He was without blemish, sinless; and yet by His own ready choice He suffered the extremity of that penalty which is due to sin; we see that this act of sacrifice for men is the most potent instrument of saving them; we see in that death our sins at once condemned and forgiven. This supreme saving reality is what we are recognizing as the means by which we are redeemed, reconciled to God, cleansed and delivered from sin. When the gross language about blood gives offence, this powerful truth of Christ's self-offering may carry ready conviction.

We are by now accustomed to the idea that we cannot put away our own sins, and that nothing in nature can transform us into holy and reconciled children of God. We see plainly the difficulty of finding any assurance that God forgives; or if we assume that He forgives, of preventing forgiveness from being a mere indulgence, a laxity which rather covers than removes sin.

In this experienced need of the human soul we recognize that unless something intervenes to bring us to God and to put away sin we are certainly lost. And then the Cross intervenes. We are led to apprehend its transcendent meaning. There is the Son of God, who has come into the world expressly to fill this gap and to

meet this need, offering Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish to God. Faith goes out to Him. Sin is confessed and forgiven. A new life begins. Sin is put away, and we live unto God.

This cannot give offence. How can it? There is no other way by which we could be reconciled to God, or be assured of reconciliation. As a genuine experience of the inward life this establishes itself and secures acceptance. It is God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Upon this saving reality we may insist with all the power at our command. We may labor to turn attention to that reality alone, and to get every soul to grasp it and to receive it. Being a transaction through the Eternal Spirit, it is grasped and received by the Spirit. It is not to be detained in the reticulations of any material or physical metaphor. By this faith in Christ, as the one sufficient eternal self-offering made to God for sin and to secure our salvation, we and all men may be saved.

It should be then for us in our time to come back out of a full and satisfying experience of the spiritual fact of redemption and cleansing through Christ, to read and to understand the use of the word "blood," which caused the offence. And how completely the spiritual truth dominated the material image in the mind of our Lord Himself may be suggested by His own use of the word "blood" in the institution of the

Supper, taken, as it must be, with its interpretation in John vi. 53.

For here the sacrificial meaning of "blood" is kept in the background, and we are reminded that we must beware of a degrading literalism: "The words which I speak unto you," He says, "are spirit and life." His thought in using the word "blood" is rather "life imparted." His blood is to be drunk, not merely poured out or offered. That is to say, He is referring to a believing assimilation of Himself, which is to be regarded as the condition of a general and an everlasting life.

Here a crude literalism is not only out of place, but impossible. And we are led on from the truth of His self-offering through the Eternal Spirit without blemish to God, the primary meaning of "blood," to a secondary meaning, viz., the vital assimilation of a life, His own life, an in-pouring of spiritual activity from Him into the believer. The imagery covers almost exactly the same thought, in this secondary meaning, as that which is expressed by the illustration of the vine and the branches. Thus when Christ Himself speaks of His blood, He is thinking not only of the atoning sacrifice, which is connected with justification, but of the imparted holiness, which we call sanctification. As this is understood the "offence of the blood" ceases.

In the light of these considerations we need not stumble at the bold imagery which declares

that "Christ loved us and loosed (or washed) us from our sins in His blood" (Rev. i. 5); or that the redeemed "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14). We have the key, the interpretation. We translate the phrase into the equivalent which both Christ Himself and the New Testament writers have abundantly given us. We have experience, or we may have experience, to go upon.

Christ loved us—that is the beginning and the end of it all; because of His love He laid down His life. In that voluntary facing of death, the sinless One bearing the penalty due to sin, we see our sins condemned and forgiven, and we are loosed from them by the new divine principle of redeeming love. In this sense His blood has washed our sins away. The metaphor of the white robes, made white in blood, carries us even a little further along the same line of interpretation. Our acceptance of Christ as our Saviour introduces into our life a power of victory over sin, and of actual holiness, which is expressed by the idea of white garments. Whiter than snow is no longer an ideal description of a righteousness imputed; it becomes also an actual description of a life received and lived. We find the possibility of a life in which sin no longer has dominion over us by faith in Christ who died.

If only we could understand and explain the term which is to some an offence, I would plead

that we might retain it. For memories and associations have gathered about it; where it is understood it sinks deep into the heart and searches out the inmost recesses.

Let me close with this memorable example of its use:

Queen Victoria was visiting one of her cottagers, a very poor woman who believed in Christ.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the Queen.

"I have all I want, I thank your Majesty," was the reply.

"But cannot I do anything? I should like to do something for you!"

"I have all I need, I thank your Majesty. But if your Majesty would promise me one thing I would be glad."

"I will if I can," replied the Sovereign. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, your Majesty, if you would promise to meet me in heaven!"

Softly, but firmly, came the reply:—

"I will do that in virtue of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is given to us to recover many of our oldest and most criticised phrases, if we will only think out their meaning, and remember, as Hobbes once wisely said, that "Words are the wise man's counters, he does but reckon with them; but they are the money of fools."

But now we pass to consider an objection which was anticipated by the first treatise ever written on justification by faith, viz., If we are justified by faith alone, may we not presumptuously continue in sin?

V

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

“We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?”—ROM. vi. 2.

AS soon as the new and revolutionary truth dawned upon the human mind that we are to be justified by faith, not on account of anything that we have done or can do, but on account of the offering for sin which Christ made once for all in His own person on the Cross, the question had to be faced whether such a Gospel of free and unmerited pardon would not lead to the continuance of sin and to a practical antinomianism.

We must admit that there was an obvious danger. We must even admit that the danger has not been always avoided. But we are bound to insist on this fact: The danger only arises from missing the nature and the reality of the truth of the Cross, which constitutes our pardon and salvation. The sixth chapter of *Romans* is as explicit as words can be upon the point; but it is not always clear or intelligible to the casual reader. If it had been understood, it is hard to see how any license for sin could ever have been found in justification by faith, or how any form of antinomianism could have resulted from substituting Grace for the Law.

There was an obvious danger. If men were to be forgiven, not for works of righteousness which they have done, but simply for a work of righteousness which Christ did, they certainly might presumptuously take the forgiveness, and neither seek nor gain any effective change of life. They might continue in sin, with the tacit assumption that they could at any time repair to the Cross and be freely forgiven. They might adopt the Moslem confidence, and fall into the Moslem laxity, on the plea that the Almighty was the All Merciful, and that His mercy and grace were even demonstrated by the atonement for sin which He had Himself provided in Christ. In view of this danger we may appreciate the protest made in the Epistle of James, and the anxiety of the Church to fence and to limit the doctrine of justification by faith, until at last, in the Council of Trent, the doctrine was virtually repealed.

Furthermore, the antinomian spirit followed on Luther's declaration of the great doctrine at the time of the Reformation. And probably all of us have met in evangelical circles instances of deluded souls who definitely shelter themselves in the pursuance of sinful ends and the indulgence of sinful habits by the plea that we are justified freely by faith, apart from any merit, and in spite of every demerit, of our own. Such persons glory in the fact that Christ saves the chief of sinners, and they deliberately take the place,

and continue the practices, of the chief of sinners, that His grace may abound.

But this danger in theory and in practice arises entirely from not observing the nature and the necessary effect of the faith that saves. To Paul the antinomian conclusion was so glaring a *non-sequitur*, that he dismisses it almost with an exclamation of impatience, and fails to present in detail the reasoning which justified his conviction. And yet the reasoning is sufficiently clear, even in the condensed argument of Rom. vi., if only we have vividly before our eyes the fact and nature of Christ's sacrifice for sin which have been presented in the foregoing pages.

Let the mind rest on the Cross, and on what it implies, on the revelation which it offers of sin, and of pardon, of suffering goodness, and of ineffable divine love; let the heart feel the rebuke of sin, the horror of sin, the penalty of sin, which are there demonstrated, and the powerful appeal of holiness and love which is there made; and it is, as Paul sees, an absolute impossibility that any one, accepting pardon on that ground, could voluntarily continue in sin, or fail to strive against it to his utmost, to resist it even unto death.

For in the Cross we are concerned, not with an abstract argument, a cold and logical doctrine, which leaves heart and conscience unaffected, but with an intense and vital spiritual fact, a reality in the divine nature, and in the action of the

living God, which works with an irresistible effect on every human spirit that seriously admits it into the region of belief and obedience. And it is only belief and obedience which constitute a justifying faith.

Let us seek to make this plain. The faith that justifies is not the mere acceptance of a statement that we are justified, or that *I* am justified. The faith that justifies is a faith in Christ, a faith in Him as coming to seek and to save us from our sins, and as accomplishing that object by offering Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish to God, a faith therefore in Him which establishes God's estimate of sin, God's unsparing effort to save us from sin, and that divine love which, seeking us at all costs, will bear all things rather than let us go.

Now the danger to which we referred, the danger of making justification by faith an excuse for continuing in sin, comes from taking faith to be merely the cold and unfeeling acceptance of a dogma that we are forgiven without merit of our own. But such faith is not only without effect; it is lifeless, it has no value at all. It is even mischievous. The powers of evil could accomplish nothing more to their mind than to induce men to accept such a "faith" as the faith that justifies. This might be described as the faith which condemns. The faith that justifies is the vital apprehension of Christ as the Saviour. It comes, either from an

awful sense of sin, and a despair of ever being rid of sin, or from a realization of God's judgment upon sin, and the need of pardon, or from the manifestation of the love of God in Christ, or from a combination and intermixture of all these causes. But what happens in this faith that justifies is that I am driven to the Cross by an impelling need, that there I find my sin condemned and yet forgiven, that there the holy love of God grips and masters me, and the consuming desire of my heart is to be free from sin, its guilt and condemnation, its defilement and degradation, its bondage and power. The faith which justifies is in a word such an experience in Christ of the blackness and horror of sin, such a sense of God's own act in pardoning and delivering from it, that it carries necessarily with it an absolute death to sin, and a resurrection to a new life. How can we who thus died to sin live any longer in it? The idea of such continuance in sin involves a contradiction, a denial, of the very faith which justifies. For this faith in Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for our sins and the sin of the whole world, is in its very nature and essence a death to sin, a repudiation of sin, a rising to a new life in Christ who rose. It is a faith in Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, in Him, whose one thought from the beginning was to deliver us from sin, and whose name "Jesus" implied it.

To speak of believing in Him, and yet not to be delivered from sin or not to live in newness of life, is merely to juggle with words, and to deceive, not others, but ourselves. The faith that justifies is a faith in Jesus, who offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish to God in order to deliver us from sin, just because we could not make that offering or deliver ourselves; in Jesus who ever receives sinners in order to make them good, who like a good shepherd laid down His life for the sheep; in Jesus, who, His sacrifice once offered, entered the spiritual world, and there ever works and intercedes to save His people from their sins. How, then, could we speak of a justifying faith in Him which leaves us free to live in sin, or which even leaves in us the desire to sin? "Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin."

It will be seen, then, that from the very nature of the case justification by faith cannot have the effect of the Moslem confidence in the All Merciful. For this faith is a confidence in the All Merciful, who is the All Holy too, and shows His condemnation of sin, and His unswerving demand for holiness in men, by that vast and unfathomable propitiation for sin in the person and redeeming work of His Son.

But the faith which justifies leads on by an irresistible logic to sanctification. It is also the

faith which sanctifies, because it is the purpose of Christ to give to every one who vitally believes in Him victory over sin, a pure and God-like nature, a genuine experience of the life of a holy God, first within, and then in the activities and results of life. As we saw in the last section, the "blood" of Christ means not only the sacrifice for sin by which sin is forgiven, but the power of a divine life by which sin is overcome and done away.

This logic of the Cross is perfectly plain in all the New Testament writers. With the mighty and surprising fact of the redemption fresh in their minds these men could not miss the results which necessarily flowed from it. They knew from their inward experience the liberation and victory which had come to them by the faith. Their attitude on every review of the old life which had been subdued, and of the new life in Christ that had come, was: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vii. 25). Sin had become to them hateful, intolerable, and loathsome. And their peculiar and perennial fountain of joy was that they knew themselves to be delivered from it, and to be pressing on to an ever fuller and more complete deliverance, a final redemption in the blessed and sinless world, to which their Lord had gone, and to which they belonged.

How is it, then, that we fall back into anti-nomianism? How is it that we are half dis-

posed to repudiate justification by faith, and with the Council of Trent to build again the fabric of dead works, which in the Cross was to be finally demolished? How is it that the modern mind is so impatient of the Cross, the atonement, the vicarious sacrifice, the idea of justification apart from works of righteousness which we have done—in a word, the one way by which men can be in any genuine sense forgiven and led to live in newness of life?

What is the answer to these questions?

It is simply this. We allow an abstract doctrine, a formal theory, an argument to take the place of the actual fact of Christ as it is revealed to us in the Gospel. Detained in the network of lifeless statements we either hold them in the mind, while our lives remain unaffected; or, disgusted at last by their powerlessness and emptiness, we indignantly repudiate them.

But the remedy is to be found in a return to reality, in a genuine spiritual transaction, in a faith which justifies, such as has been described. For all the past experience of the saints who have been redeemed and forgiven confirms the view which is presented in Paul's epistles with such startling freshness. No hypocrisies and travesties, numerous as they are, ever alter the genuine experience of the saints. They gather now from many climes and many epochs; they are coming from China, Japan, Korea, from Africa, and the Islands of the Pacific; though their

languages differ, their voice and testimony are one. That sin-offering on Calvary very plainly now avails for all. He who offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish to God is shown to be the Saviour of the world.

For what is this testimony which the Cross evokes? It is this, arising from myriads of voices, which are now chanting on the crystal sea, and praising the Lamb that was slain: "We were foredone; we were barely conscious of sin; we hardly wished to be good. But a breath blew from Calvary like the wind which passes over the garden of spices. The Cross rose before our eyes. We saw Him who hung thereon die—die, as it seemed, for us! Then there awoke in our hearts the desire to be forgiven, to be washed, and to be made clean. Some unutterable yearning arose within us—which must have been there, but we did not understand it—to be good, to stand in the presence of God pure and acceptable. But we were powerless; we could not make ourselves good; we could not put away our former sins, we could not even be sure that the desire for goodness would continue.

"Then we sought God with tears and prayers, with penitence and contrition. Out of the depths we cried unto Him. And presently the meaning of the Cross was unveiled to our astonished eyes, and we began to understand the yearning for goodness, and not to despair of its attainment.

“We saw the meaning of the Cross. We heard that lonely cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’ And we knew that the sinless Son of God was taking upon Himself the sin of the world. We felt that God condemned sin there more deeply, more utterly, than we had ever imagined. Our own sins appeared like a mountain; they oppressed, they overwhelmed us.

“But we heard the plea, ‘Father, forgive them.’ We heard the promise to the repentant thief. We heard the cry of triumph ring through the universe, ‘It is finished.’ And we knew that for His sake we were forgiven; our sins were dying on His cross; and with their death new life was beginning. Then we believed, and accepted and rejoiced. We were buried with Him in baptism.

“And a new life began, as it were a resurrection life. Old things had in that baptism passed away, and all had become new. How terrible sin now appeared; yes, even if a spot showed upon the white baptismal garments. Impelled by the new life within us we could but war constantly against sin within or around us. The love of Christ constrained us, the love of God was shed abroad in our hearts. We longed to pity, to help, to save, to spend and to be spent, to make our very life a libation, to find ourselves only by losing ourselves. Then we discovered that Christ was living in us by His

Spirit, Christ who had died for us, Christ who had vanquished sin; Christ was living in us, the hope of glory."

This is the song of the redeemed before the throne. And we, who still fight the battle of faith, share the experience. How could we know anything but Christ and Him crucified? How could we glory in anything but the Cross? And though our infirmities appall us, and our shortcomings reproach us, and the motions of unconquered sin from time to time within us fill our hearts with a shuddering awe, yet we have but one overmastering desire—to be good, to be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory. And how could we who thus died to sin live any longer therein?

This is the story; this the confession; this the Hallelujah! It rises from myriads of hearts that are redeemed, from multitudes even in this state of pilgrimage and probation.

It is the testimony that in the Cross of Christ our sins are dead.

VI

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”—GAL. vi. 2.

THERE is an inestimable advantage in grasping the truth of the Cross, which, though it is but secondary to the main boon, is in itself no slight evidence of the doctrine. It is this: The truth of the Cross gives a key to human life, and reveals a principle which is at work, unostentatiously and yet obviously, in the whole make and development of the world. This principle, appearing in a rudimentary form from the very beginning of things, working steadily through the kingdom of the inorganic, and with fuller expression in the kingdom of the organic, emerging as a necessary factor in all human life, which is to be progressive and valuable, reaching its utmost, its Divine, articulation in the fact of the Cross, is *the principle of Sacrifice*. Life is maintained by Death. Progress is made by one dying for another, or even for all. The gain of the whole is purchased by the loss of individuals. Human life and history derive all their worth and value from the sacrifice which makes progress possible. The formula of human life, so far as human life is

of consequence and of permanence, is: "I give myself for others; I only find myself by losing myself."

Carlyle's dying bequest to Huxley was the ever-memorable saying: "Give yourself royally!" Therein the old sage only uttered the wisdom of all the ages, and spoke, in the sounding chamber of death, the secret of all the world. It was the Christian message. It is difficult to realize that this, which seems to us to be so implicit in science and history and biography, was only made explicit as the Divine Truth by the Cross of Christ.

To lay bare this principle in its completeness would require a series of works as great as Herbert Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy." But the titles of the volumes may be suggested.

It is likely enough that our globe itself is the conglomerate of fragments of perished worlds. It is certain that the primeval rocks are the igneous consolidation, or the sedimentary deposit, of matter, which lost itself to form them.

Thus the principle of the Cross is at work in the making of the earth; Vol. i. would be "Vicarious Sacrifice in Matter." When we ask how life came into the earth, the greatest man of science of the nineteenth century, Lord Kelvin, offers as the only explanation which can be given, that it was brought by an aerolite from some shattered world where life had already existed, and from that primordial germ all life on the

planet has sprung. Thus the Son of God coming into the world to save the world is a fact which was anticipated and foretold by the origin of life itself. Life was laid down in order that life on the earth might be.

When we endeavor to trace the progress of life on the earth every scientific treatise proves to be an illustration of the principle which is now before us. Vegetable life, in sea or on the dry land, seems only to exist in order to give itself for the more conscious and discrete life of fish and bird and beast. For this the *algæ* grow in the depths of the sea, and the river-beds and ponds and lakes are lined with sedges and lilies and reeds. For this the 14,000 species of moss clothe the rocks, and the soft mantle of grasses is thrown over the fields, and the seeds spring, and the trees blossom, and the fruit forms and dies. Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die it abides alone: but in death it multiplies into a harvest. And by the harvest the tribes of men are fed. Vol. ii. would be entitled, "Vicarious Sacrifice in Vegetable Life."

When we look into the story of each species of organic thing we find that there is always and everywhere the same principle of sacrifice. The very species, says Darwin, have been developed by sacrifice. The new species comes out of the old by that one law. For each species that survives and becomes stable there is a vast sacrifice of rudimentary or tentative forms. Within

each species the same law holds and works. For its sake the individual is always sacrificed. Look into the hive, where the drones exist, that one may be selected as the mate of the mother; all else perish. And the mate himself dies in the rapture of his connubial task. There in the hive is the microcosm of all life. It is the swarm, the hive, that is of moment; the individual bee lays down its life freely and without a thought that the hive may live. And the hive lives that others may eat the honey—

“Sic vos non vobis mellificatis, apes.”

All through the realm of animal life runs the law, with deepening significance as we ascend, that the mother shall bear and rear her young at the risk or even the cost of her own life. She protects her young though she perishes. She dies gladly if a man-child is born into the world.

In the lower forms of human life the instinct of the unreasoning brutes still survives. Thus in a Bolivian tribe of aborigines, it is the custom to kill every man when he is too old to hunt, and every woman when she has ceased to bear. That expresses, too brutally, the law that runs through the life of society. The generations contribute each its strength, its labor, its thought, to the whole, and then perish. The whole remains, lives out of the death of its component parts.

Passing out of the instinctive and irrational movements of our kind, we enter the region of reason and deliberate choice, the region of the higher emotions and of love, the region of conscious life co-operating towards the ultimate results.

Here the principle of which we speak assumes a clearer and a nobler form, it begins to clothe itself with majesty and to betray its Divine origin.

Human history, it is perceived, finds its whole value, its chance of progress, its hope of a goal, in the royal self-giving of elect souls, and even in the perpetual self-giving of obscure and unrecorded multitudes. Marcus Curtius leaps into the open gulf in the Forum, because the oracle declares that it will only close if Rome's noblest possession is thrown in. What is nobler, says he, than Rome's patriotic youth? There in a symbol is expressed the truth for all time. Everything for mankind, and for human progress, depends on those who give themselves royally, who count not their lives precious if they may serve. This is the ennobling element even of war.

"Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori."

The mean and greedy outrage of that acknowledged blunder, the war of 1900, was almost redeemed by the thousands of young Englishmen who left their business, their studies, their es-

tates, their honors, to die in obscure corners of the veldt, or in the squalor and inefficiency of the fever camps.

But all that is valuable in human life is gained by those who really die for men without the pomp and circumstance of war. Here is the man of science, who searching into the properties of radium, and seeking to apply it for the help and the healing of his fellow-men, sacrifices his limbs and his powers, and consents to become an incurable cripple; another, to find out the security against the explosives in the coal-pit to which hundreds of miners succumb every year, shuts himself up in his laboratory and runs the daily risk of perishing in the mephitic air.

Or even down at the lowest point of the social scale to which men sink, there is a heroism of the same kind daily transacting itself. The homeless outcasts are seeking the limited shelter open to them for the night. A ticket is given to one of them who looks strong and burly. "Guvnor," he says, "give it to my pal here: he's ill." The poor fellow with the cough goes to the cheerless bunk and lives. The strong man, as he seems, walks the streets, develops pneumonia, and dies.

Yes, as we begin to examine more closely into the texture of human life, whether in its rudimentary forms or in its highest development, whether in the great and famous or in the obscure and unrecorded, it appears as if there is

only one principle which redeems humanity, which gives to it a meaning, which opens up to it a goal worth seeking and attaining: it is the principle of vicarious sacrifice. Men and women are dying for one another. Sometimes it is only by an instinct; but always there is an ascending scale of voluntary and heroic self-giving, until at last the obscure principle at the root blossoms out into gorgeous flower and celestial fruit. These human beings everywhere, in manifold forms, take upon themselves the sufferings and pains of the others, in order to relieve them; take upon themselves the sins and follies of the others, in order to save them. Sufferings and pains are the common and inevitable lot of men; but *what redeems them* is the voluntary suffering and pain by which the noble and the loving hearts try to help the rest. Sins and follies seem to be the very warp and weft of human life, but *what redeems them* is the suffering love of those who take the consequences upon themselves that the sinful and the foolish may be reclaimed.

The one valid and valuable fact running through life is Redeeming Love. And with this truth now revealed to us, from the beginning of the world, all through its course, we come up to the Cross. And there the principle is brought to a higher, nay its highest, expression. For there the Son of God, as man, is seen doing for the whole world exactly what the noblest and

best, according to their opportunities and powers, are always doing. His coming into the world at all is sacrifice, if He came from the throne of glory, out of an eternal pre-existence, out of the life of God. His years of human life, in contact with all the meanness, the squalor, the pride, the malice, and the guilt of men, was a sacrifice. But when He laid down His life, as a shepherd lays down his life for his sheep; when He chose and bore the shameful death of the Cross, in order that man might be forgiven and reconciled to God, His sacrifice (since He was what He was and who He was) became the supreme, central, and final sacrifice, which the world needed if it was to be brought to God, and which human life needed in order to acquire an interpretation, a significance, a goal.

Dwell for a moment on the value of this key to life. If I am not mistaken, the greatest torment of men is not suffering, or loss, or failure, or disappointment; it is rather the riddle of the unintelligible world. They do not see the meaning or the object of it all. They see clearly suffering and pain and death. It is, for all human beings, the suffering and pain and death of others rather than their own which bewilder and trouble them. They toss uneasily on this bed of pain as in a nightmare. They doubt God, and deny Him, because how could He, if He was powerful and good, allow this scene of suffering, pain, and death?

That is the great enigma, the torturing problem, the main cause of all our troubles, and the only cause of our despair. If only this enigma were solved; if there were a key to this cruel lock, we could bear, we could be brave, we could triumph even in our sorest trials; though our hearts should be wrung with anguish, yet with such a key in our hands, we should be patient, resolute, even glad.

But the Cross of Christ is precisely this key. It fits into the lock and turns it. The door opens and we enter.

God's love is not shown by a painless world. How foolish of us to suppose that it would be. It is not shown by a world of ease and comfort and indulgence. It would be possible to make a happy world of well-fed, sensuous beasts; but how inglorious! No; God's love is shown by eliciting Love in the creatures He has made. And love, even His own love, is made and shown by sacrifice. The comfort and ease of the body—Hannibal at Capua—is not the aim of the world or of human life. Such a term of indulgence is an incident, an unwholesome dream, from which men awake quickly, sated and disgusted. But the real object of it all is to grow the precious plant of Love. All pain, all suffering, all trouble, are worth while, if that results. Unflinchingly God, who is Love, started the long train of evolution and sped the earth on its adventurous career, that through the travail of its growth, and

by the gradual stages of its enlarging life, it might at last produce Love, hearts that love, that show their love by sacrifice, that by sacrifice elicit Love. From the first, as we have just seen, there were always the rudiments and the foreshadowings and the promises. God has borne with, and controlled, the toilsome process, because the results though slow were sure.

All through the age-long agony, Christ has taught us to see, every human soul that learnt Divine love, that sacrificed freely, that lost its life to save it, has been gathered in. A Father's House with many mansions receives and shelters for eternity the hearts that have truly loved.

But the process is to reach finality on the earth. The Cross will triumph. God who so loved the world as to give His Son, will ultimately win the love of the world, the love of all the world. There will one day be a kingdom of God on the earth, at least for a time (though when that is achieved perhaps the material globe will be resolved into its elements, to make way for a new heaven and a new earth) in which the Law of Sacrifice will hold universally. Then there will not be divided nations, but a single Commonwealth. Then men will not seek their personal good at all, but find it only in loving and serving and blessing the rest. Then that sacred atmosphere which has been found at times in homes, in churches, and in fortunate circles,

will be diffused throughout the world. Then even on the earth as the prelude to the Eternal Kingdom, Christ, who offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit without blemish, unto God, shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

VII

GIVING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD

"We beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."—2 COR. v. 20.

IF we have obtained some glimpse into the meaning of that propitiation which God set forth in His Son Jesus Christ; if the essence of that propitiation is to be found in the fact that Christ offered *Himself*, without sin; and if there is even an intelligible reason why God can receive the whole world in virtue of the self-offering of the Beloved Son: let us turn back to that passage with which we began—2 Corinthians v. 19—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

In coming back to that text it will be evident to us all that it implies that God *is* reconciled to the world. Think of that for a moment—the transcendent truth that God *is* reconciled to the world—a truth which no religion has been able to apprehend, until Christ came, so that every religion has consisted of frantic attempts to conciliate and to propitiate God, and none could understand the truth that God *was* reconciled and is the Reconciler. Think of the truth which

is expressed in the exquisite image of the prodigal son—a father, watching, waiting, eager for his child to return, and ready to rejoice when he comes back, ready with the ring and the robe and the feast.

I read the other day that a father in Watford last year was greatly troubled about his son, who had gone wrong, and was now ill and despondent and wrote to him, very tremblingly and fearfully, as if to ask whether there was any hope. The father sent a telegram to him, and the telegram consisted of one word; the one word was "Home," and it was signed "Father." Now the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's telegram to the sinful world, summed up in one word, "Home," and signed by one name, "FATHER."

But when you see, as this passage teaches us or suggests, the great truth that God is reconciled to the world, you come to what is called here the "Ministry of Reconciliation"; and that is the subject on which I wish to speak. I shall try to bring out briefly the *needs* of a Ministry of Reconciliation, the *nature* of a Ministry of Reconciliation, and the *agents* of a Ministry of Reconciliation.

1. Now, the need of such a ministry will be evident immediately when you realize that reconciliation means the reconciliation of two. In one place in our Authorized Version the word is actually translated by "atonement"—at-one-

ment (Rom. v. 11). Reconciliation means that two who were presumably alienated are now at one; so that reconciliation can never be complete while it is all on one side. Supposing one party to this quarrel is full of pardoning love, absolutely gracious and tender, and seeking in every way to make up the difference, and the other party remains stubborn, or cold, or indifferent, then the reconciliation can never be complete. And the need of this Ministry of Reconciliation lies in the fact that, while the Gospel teaches us that God is reconciled to men, men are not reconciled to God. This quarrel is all on one side, and the object of the Gospel is to bring the unreconciled world to the God who is reconciled to it.

Now, of course, a great part of the world—the heathen world—is absolutely ignorant of the truth that God is reconciled to it. But a great part of the so-called Christian world is practically ignorant of that truth too. There must be hundreds and thousands of people in London who have no notion of the truth that God is reconciled to them. It may be, of course, that some of them have heard of it again and again, and they have never taken it seriously; they have never reflected that, if the reconciliation is to be a reality, they must come into relations with the God who is reconciled, and must yield their hearts to Him, sealing the bargain and accepting the glorious consequences. It may be that many

of these poor souls are bewildered with difficulties, or that they have never heard the Gospel preached in its glorious fulness. It may be that, when it has been preached to them, they have taken exception to it because of the feebleness and inefficiency of the arguments and explanations by which it has been commended to them. It may be, of course—I fear it often is—that those who have been preaching this glad news of the reconciled God have not themselves *felt* it, and have not trembled with the joy of the announcement, so that poor, sinful, unreconciled men have not recognized in the tone of the preacher the joyful news, but have supposed that it was a cold logic, or even a half-concealed sentence of condemnation.

But I fear we must also admit that one of the great reasons why people need the Ministry of Reconciliation is that they do not *want* to be reconciled to God. They have heard that God is reconciled to them. They have even in a way believed the truth of the Gospel, this message that we are speaking about now; but, candidly, at the bottom of their hearts they do not *want* to be reconciled to God. They see that to be reconciled to Him would be a grave interference with their pursuits and with their pleasures, and they do not wish to be disturbed by the glad tidings which would call them into the reconciled Presence to be themselves reconciled to Him.

You see, then, that the need of the Ministry of Reconciliation lies in the fact that the reconciliation to be complete must be on *both* sides, and that a large number of persons do not seem to know the truth of reconciliation, and others do not seem inclined to be reconciled to God, even when they know. The unreconciled world has to be brought to the reconciled God, and the Ministry of Reconciliation is the method by which it is to be done.

2. Now, let us look for a moment at the nature of this Ministry of Reconciliation. It is described in the passage as twofold. First of all it is described as a "Ministry of Reconciliation to wit," and then this verse 19 is the description of this ministry "to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." The first element of the Ministry of Reconciliation, and by far the most important element, is simply the perpetual, clear, and cogent announcement of the fact that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, not imputing to them their transgressions. The great object of the ministry is not to raise curious questions, or to enter into a variety of discussions on earthly and human matters, but the ministry is maintained that always, from week to week, and from day to day, the clear voice may ring out over London, and over the world,

the announcement of the supreme truth, that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, and that He calls men to Himself by faith in His propitiation.

Now, how completely that message is adapted to accomplish the object we are seeing to-day on every side. I got a letter from a friend, which has filled me with greater joy than even this spring sunshine and the coming of the flowers. He tells me of what has been happening during the past week in Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Some services were held for the boys in those Homes, and each day the Gospel was preached to them by an earnest man in a plain and simple way, and the theme throughout was the Cross of Christ. You know the kind of boys who are gathered in the Homes of Dr. Barnardo. They are the waifs and strays of the city; they are those who are the most neglected and apparently the most unfortunate of our population. But day by day this man spoke to these lads about the Cross of Christ—the great message of reconciliation. The lads listened intently, and last Wednesday a most extraordinary thing happened. When the meeting began these lads took it all into their own hands; many of them rose up and began to testify—fancy these lads, in the presence of 460 of their companions, standing up and testifying that they had found Jesus! And now, at the end of the week, there are in that Home over 100 boys who have absolutely

come out and given their hearts to Christ. *That* is the *power of the Cross*; that is what the word of reconciliation through the Cross of Christ can do here, as you read this page, and can do wherever it is preached. There is nothing else that can bring the unreconciled heart to God, but *this can* and *does*, wherever it is faithfully proclaimed. It was because of the supreme power of this truth that St. Paul said he was determined "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." His business seemed to him to be to hold up to the world this simple truth, and then it would be God's great business to bring souls to Himself by it.

And it is because of this fact that it is the great duty of the Christian Church to make known the simple statement of the truth to the whole world. All do not immediately see what I call the logic of foreign missions. But surely you will see it from this point of view—the *first* duty is to proclaim that truth, because that truth proclaimed in any part of the world establishes the first seeds, or the first foundations, of the Christian Church. Take, for example, what happened in Japan. You remember that in 1854, when the British fleet was lying in Nagasaki Bay, the Japanese Government was extremely anxious that we should not land, and General Wakasa was appointed to watch the fleet and to prevent the British troops from landing. It happened that as he rowed about the bay

in fulfilment of his duty, some careless sailor on one of those English men-of-war had dropped his New Testament overboard. Probably he cared very little for his New Testament and he parted with it without any regret. But it so happened that General Wakasa picked it up out of the sea, and he was curious to know what this book was. He got an interpreter to tell him what it was. He became interested in it. He procured a Chinese New Testament and read it through—it brought him to Christ. Twelve years later General Wakasa came down to Verbeck, the missionary, and asked to be baptized because he had found the Saviour. Your British sailor let his New Testament fall into the sea, but that New Testament converted the General of the Japanese army, and his family, and the whole circle of his friends, and planted the blessed truth of reconciliation in the islands of Japan. That is the logic of missions. The first duty is to let the world know, and let every race of men know, to have it in every language, to put it within reach of every human being, that “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”

But now there is a second part of the Ministry of Reconciliation which is described in this passage. It says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, and we beseech you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God.” The second part of the Ministry of Reconciliation is beseeching.

The Ambassadors of Christ are commissioned, first of all, to tell men the truth, but then they must begin to beseech. It is, indeed, a strange thing that men should need beseeching to take what is the greatest good, and indeed the only good, that the human soul can gain—reconciliation with God. But it is a fact that all of us need beseeching, and most of us who have come to Christ have come because some dear voice entreated. And it is the duty of every Christian to use *every* act of entreaty, every sanctified art of entreaty—argument, reasoning, pleading—but also literally beseeching, wooing, winning, pleading with men to be reconciled with God. Are you reconciled with God? You believe that God is reconciled to you, in Christ, but are *you* reconciled to *Him*? Have you come to the point? Have you faced the great question? Have you sealed the Covenant? Have you taken your stand with Him, reconciled?—reconciled to God? Do answer that question, are you reconciled? I am not speaking to people in general, I am speaking to *you* personally—are *you* reconciled to God? Then, if not, I *beseech* you to be reconciled; I *entreat* you to-day to be reconciled. I plead with you not to defer it, not to neglect it, and not to rest until you can say—

“’Tis done, the great transaction’s done:
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, I be-

seech you, on behalf of Christ, I beseech you as the greatest favor you can do to me, but also as the thing that God wants most, be reconciled to God to-day.

3. But now there remains another point which was raised. Who are the agents of reconciliation? Who are the "we" who say "we are ambassadors for God, we beseech you in Christ's stead"? You say, perhaps, St. Paul and the Apostles are meant. Yes; but they are only meant because they were reconciled themselves, and those who are the Ambassadors of the Reconciliation are the persons who are reconciled; *all* who are reconciled become the Ministers of Reconciliation. The message is of such a kind, the truth is of such a kind, that when we have received it we cannot help communicating it. You could not be reconciled to God and then be careless whether other men were. Your great pity for them and your knowledge of the joy and peace of believing makes you earnest to win them and to get them reconciled too.

During this past month one of the most remarkable things has happened that I have ever heard of. Mr. Quenton Ashlyn was known at St. George's Hall as one of the wittiest and ablest entertainers of the day. He went one day into the Albert Hall—went, I believe, in order to get a subject for one of his satirical sketches. He thought it would be very easy to make fun of Dr. Torrey and Mr. Alexander.

But when he got in he did not find it so funny as he had thought; he did not see much room for satire. And when he went home that night his sister put into his bedroom one of Dr. Torrey's sermons, and Mr. Ashlyn read the sermon, and that night before he went to bed he had to come to God. He was converted, and he wrote to the people at St. George's Hall that he would not come to entertain the public again. But he did go to St. George's Hall, and sat in the audience, and when the manager announced that Mr. Quenton Ashlyn would not appear "owing to some indisposition" Quenton Ashlyn leapt to his feet in the audience and said, "I am not indisposed; I was never better in my life, but I have come to God, and I want you to; and you won't find me entertaining you any more, but, if I can, I will tell you what I have found." And the manager of that entertainment invited him to come and to preach to the people, and he has held some meetings in St. George's Hall crowded with those who knew him in his old character; and this man, knowing nothing of the art of preaching, simply because he is reconciled himself, has been telling the people of it and beseeching them to be reconciled too. That is the eternal method of the Gospel. Believe me, my friends, if you are reconciled to God yourself you are bound to be winning others, and if you are not winning others there is some reason to think that you are not reconciled your-

self. It is one of those things you cannot keep in. How can you sit quietly there and let the world perish when you are reconciled? It is impossible! If you are reconciled to God you cannot help leading, beseeching, reasoning, working, to win the world to Him.

So I say to you, if you are reconciled will you take your part in this Ministry of Reconciliation? Will you beseech the world to be reconciled to God—will you? And if you will, there are these five things that you have to bear in mind, these five points, as it were, of the great Ministry of Reconciliation.

The first point, of course, is this—that you make your calling and your election sure; and that can be done if you come to Christ here and now; seal the great Covenant in His blood, and admit Him to be your personal Saviour. That is the first point.

But the second point is that you should grasp this word of Reconciliation in order that you may communicate it to others, that by prayer, by study, and by experience, by making the trial, you should learn to communicate the great message of the Reconciliation of God to the world in order that men may be reconciled to Him.

Then the third thing is that you should ask in God's sight what your particular talent is in the Ministry of Reconciliation. It may be that you are called to be a missionary, and to go out into the heathen field to tell the Christless

world the glad tidings. It may be that you are called to preach in some English church or mission-room. It may be that you are called to teach in classes or in clubs. It may be that your point will be personal influence, and that by personal influence and quiet, earnest, faithful conversation with others you will win souls to Christ, like that lad in Mr. Mantle's Home.¹ But ask God what your talent is. You say to me, "I don't think I have a talent; I am not capable of bringing any one to Christ." My dear friend, if that were so you would be a monstrosity! There is not such a person—if you are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, in that fact you have a talent to use to reconcile the world to Him. Now ask Him what the talent is. I cannot undertake to appoint to you your talents. I should not wonder if God has hidden in you talents brighter and better than any one who knows you has ever dreamed of. I will not tell you what you are to do, because I am not able to estimate at its right worth even the least human soul. But I tell you you have a talent, and you may have many bright and wonderful gifts which God can use; and the great thing is to ask Him what your talent is. That is the third point.

¹ Mr. Gregory Mantle, in his first annual report of the Deptford Mission, told of the League of Six, six boys who, converted, brought 160 boys to Christ in the year.

Then the fourth point is, having found what is your gift, however humble it may be, give yourself to *your* ministry—not to mine, not to another man's. Do not be in the least concerned that you cannot do what other people can; it does not matter at all if you are not adapted to speak to this congregation; and it does not matter at all if you have not got the gift of speech to speak in public. But *your* talent, your little ministry of bringing to Christ, whatever it is, give yourself to it wholeheartedly; give yourself to it with passion, and faith, and prayer.

Why, I tell you this; supposing your ministry were to get together little bundles of the spring flowers, to tie to the flowers a text out of the New Testament, and to give the little bundle to people in the street or to poor bedridden people in the homes that you know—*give* yourself to that ministry. Bind the flowers together with faith and prayer. Give the flowers with love and hope, and God will bless them. He will carry home His own blessed Salvation by the gift of a mere snowdrop, if you have given yourself behind it. Give yourself to your ministry. Have you given yourself to your ministry? I have not given myself to mine as I ought to have done; but I ask you to join with me this morning in a pledge that we will give ourselves to our own particular ministry, to beseech men to be reconciled to God.

And then the fifth point of it is that you shall

believe absolutely that God will work in you and will work by you, and that, though you cannot see it now, in the future golden harvests shall be won. Let us beseech men to be reconciled to God, and let us never rest "until into the fold of the Love of God we have gathered them all."

How little did Paul know, when he wrote the words which we have been considering, the age-long influence which they were to have! The sentences which came from his pen in that letter to Corinth are living and working still.

Your work too, reconciled children of God, through Christ Jesus, is eternal and widening, for it is part of His work, who works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.

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